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Authoritarian "Rule of Law" and Regime Legitimacy

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Abstract:	<p>A prominent hypothesis to explain the durability of authoritarian regimes focuses on the official adoption of law and legal institutions. The present study offers a novel empirical approach to test the relationship between legal construction and regime legitimation, drawing on a quasi-experiment and original panel survey in rural China. Using difference-in-difference, sub-group, and two-stage least squares analyses, it finds that the Chinese state's project of legal construction powerfully shapes the legal consciousness of ordinary rural citizens and that state-constructed legal consciousness enhances regime legitimacy. The study also presents qualitative evidence to identify the causal mechanism linking state-constructed legal consciousness and regime legitimacy: the expansion of local institutions like state-run legal-aid centers in rural communities. The study contributes to the institutional focus in debates about authoritarian durability by providing evidence at the intersection of state and society.</p>

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Introduction

One prominent hypothesis to explain the durability of authoritarian regimes focuses on the official embrace of law and legal institutions. The idea that authoritarian regimes employ law to entrench their rule extends Slater’s recent invocation of infrastructural power and reflects both aspects of Svobik’s (2012) analysis of threats to authoritarian survival. In the Chinese case, the regime uses law to manage both elite threats—as in the case of Bo Xilai (Tang and Lee, 2014)—and mass threats—as in the case of labor protest (Lee, 2007). This study examines the construction of authoritarian “rule of law” by the Chinese state, focusing on dynamics at the rural grassroots.¹ Building on the work of Ginsburg & Moustafa (2008), Stockmann & Gallagher (2011), Rajah (2012), and Massoud (2013), it tests two hypotheses: first, that the authoritarian state shapes popular understandings of the “rule of law,” and, second, that the construction of authoritarian “rule of law” is positively associated with regime legitimacy.

Like other authoritarian states, the Chinese state has embarked on an ambitious program of legal construction. This effort is highlighted by the adoption in 1999 of a constitutional amendment announcing that “The People’s Republic of China exercises the rule of law, building a socialist country governed according to law (Constitution).” The Chinese state has embraced rule by law in multiple ways, including the explosive growth of formal legislation passed by the National People’s Congress, the training of legal professionals—including a growing cadre of credentialed lawyers from among hundreds of thousands of law graduates each year, and the

¹ A note on the terms rule of law and rule by law is in order at the outset. The term rule of law refers to a system in which all participants, including preeminent elites and the ruling party, are subject to the law. The term rule by law, by contrast, refers to a system in which preeminent elites and the ruling party place themselves above the law. It is clear that the Chinese Communist Party is not subordinate to Chinese law. In referring to the program of legal construction in China, this article uses the terms rule by law or “rule of law” in quotation marks, invoking the party-state’s own usage, as in the 1999 constitutional amendment cited in the next paragraph.

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3 expansion of the court system—including civil, criminal, administrative, and even environmental
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5 and other special courts (Stern, 2014). Finally, the Chinese state has undertaken a sustained
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7 program to promote legal consciousness (法律意识) on the part of all Chinese citizens (Fu and
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9 Cullen, 2008). This study focuses on this final aspect of legal construction: the state strategy to
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11 imbue Chinese citizens with state-constructed legal consciousness, particularly around the
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13 institution of legal aid for ordinary citizens. It assesses the effect of state-constructed legal
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15 consciousness on the beliefs of ordinary citizens about regime legitimacy.
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20 Moustafa and Ginsburg (2008) invoke E.P. Thompson in questioning whether legal
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22 institutions can successfully perform a legitimizing function if those institutions lack any real
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24 autonomy from the executive. Minzner (2011) questions the entire project of legal construction
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26 in China, given the reassertion of strict political controls within newly constructed legal
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28 institutions. Stern (2014) reiterates that law and legal institutions are subordinate to the Chinese
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30 Communist Party. The idea of regime legitimation via “rule of law” seems especially counter-
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32 intuitive in light of recent, widely-reported detentions of public interest and human rights
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34 lawyers in China. Yet, as explored in this analysis, it is an empirical question whether the state’s
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36 promotion of rule by law can shape citizens’ legal consciousness and perform a legitimating
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38 function even in the absence of any independence from the ruling party.
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44 Legitimation is widely identified as both the goal and outcome of the construction by
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46 authoritarian states of law and legal institutions. Ginsburg and Moustafa (2008, pp. 4-10) identify
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48 political legitimation, social control, monitoring and control of state personnel, credible
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50 commitment to investors, and delegation of controversial policy decisions to the courts as
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52 important functions performed by judicial institutions in authoritarian regimes. While all of these
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54 functions are present to a greater or lesser degree in the Chinese context, scholarly attention
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focuses on legitimation. There is broad agreement among China scholars regarding the state goal of legitimation in promoting “rule of law” (Diamant et al., 2005; Epstein, 1994; Landry, 2008; Lee, 2007; Stockman and Gallagher, 2011; Liebman, 2014). Stockmann and Gallagher (2011), for example, hold that, “In the case of China, the regime has adopted ‘rule of law’ reforms to improve the effectiveness, efficiency, and legitimacy of their rule” (p. 439). However, these claims have not been tested directly, in part due to the challenges in measuring legitimacy (Gilley, 2006; Hechter, 2009). This challenge is not unique to the Chinese case. Massoud (2013), in his analysis of law in Sudan, and Rajah (2012), in her study of law in Singapore, both highlight how regimes have built legal systems that enhance regime legitimacy, but it is not clear how these authors capture legitimacy empirically (Wilson, 2014).

This study finds that the state’s project of legal construction powerfully shapes the legal consciousness of ordinary rural citizens and, moreover, that state-constructed legal consciousness enhances regime legitimacy. The analysis proceeds as follows. The first two sections explore the concepts of legal consciousness and regime legitimacy in comparative and Chinese context. The following section introduces a quasi-experiment in “rule-of-law” awareness in conjunction with an original, representative panel survey of 621 rural residents. The quasi-experiment compares communities differentially exposed to a media campaign about state-provided legal aid. The media campaign is implemented through existing media outlets and informs citizens about actual legal-aid services in their community. The specific focus on legal aid reflects the extensive state program to provide these services at the local level and the centrality of legal aid to “rule-of-law” construction; state-provided legal aid is intended to provide every citizen with recourse in the context of citizen grievances. The panel survey provides measures of legal consciousness and attitudes about regime legitimacy on the part of ordinary citizens. The claim that the

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3 authoritarian state can change legal consciousness is tested with difference-in-difference analysis
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5 using multiple measures of legal consciousness. The claim that state-constructed legal
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7 consciousness enhances regime legitimacy is tested with difference-in-difference, sub-group, and
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9 two-stage least squares analyses. The penultimate section draws on qualitative evidence to
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11 explore causal mechanisms relating legal consciousness and legitimacy, with a focus on the
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13 infrastructural power of local state institutions like legal-aid centers. These centers concretize
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15 state power at the rural grassroots, connecting citizens to the state and promoting state-dominated
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17 channels for managing conflict. The final section offers conclusions about authoritarian “rule-of-
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19 law,” regime legitimacy, and authoritarian durability.
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24 Legal Consciousness

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27 In social science terms, legal consciousness refers to “the ongoing, dynamic process of
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29 constructing one’s understanding of, and relationship to, the social world through the use of legal
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31 conventions and discourses” (McCann, 1994, p. 7). Such consciousness is grounded in part on
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33 knowledge and ideas “about the nature, function, and operation of law” (Trubek, 1984, p. 592).
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35 One core aspect of the state project of legal construction led by the CCP is the promotion of
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37 popular legal consciousness. The state actively promotes such awareness of law among the
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39 population. “China is probably the only country in the world where the government makes it an
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41 explicit and specific long-term strategy to imbue its citizens with knowledge of the law” (Fu and
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43 Cullen, 2008, p.125). To achieve this goal, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Central
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45 Committee and the governing State Council have tasked the Ministry of Justice and CCP
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47 Propaganda Department with disseminating legal knowledge (普法), a policy initiated in 1986.
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49 Since then, there have been six consecutive five-year plans for popularizing law (State Council,
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51 2011). The plans assign state-controlled media outlets as well as units of local government, like
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local justice bureaus and courts, responsibility for promoting legal knowledge among the populace. The broad goal is “to make the law become known to every family and household, and to embed the law deeply in people’s minds” (Exner, 1995, p.76). Plans for disseminating legal knowledge take place in an institutional environment in which the state exercises “high media control” (Lü, 2014, p. 435). The party-state officially mobilizes state-sponsored television, radio, press, publishing, billboards, and arts programming to promote awareness of law. As Perry (2007) notes, “Bookstores these days are stocked with pamphlets detailing government laws, policies and regulations; the air waves are filled by radio talk shows that advise listeners on how to ensure that regulations are enforced and contracts are fulfilled; newspapers are replete with legal advice columns for aggrieved citizens; and so on” (p. 21). Similarly, O’Brien and Li (2006) note that the government’s legal education campaign is “a good source of information about laws, policies, and central commitments” (p. 40). Thus, both scholars and government officials highlight the party-state mission of informing the public about law.

The state’s centrality in promoting legal consciousness is a prominent feature of the Chinese case. This contrasts with accounts of legal consciousness in both developed democracies and authoritarian regimes in the developing world. McCann’s (1994) account of legal-consciousness in the U.S. and Engel’s (2005) observation of legal consciousness in Thailand are illustrative. McCann’s (1994) account of “efforts to disseminate legal knowledge” in the U.S. pay-equity movement focus on the actions of civil society activists—not the state—to inform and mobilize other activists through the free and open dissemination of information in “local news media, pamphlets, flyers, newsletters, films, speeches, workshops, and other related means to specialized audiences” (p.63). In Chinese context, by contrast, the central leadership employs similar formats in a top-down program operating through the state hierarchy to reach

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3 the general public.² While both China and other Asian countries may be part of the “spread of a
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5 new legal consciousness to the periphery” (Trubek and Santos, 2006, p.4), in Engel’s
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7 observations of modern Thai society, diffuse media discussions of law and rights do not
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9 penetrate to the grassroots. He notes that in Thailand, “public discourse frequently refers to
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11 rights, the rule of law, and constitutionalism” (Engel, 2005, p. 511). But Engel cautions that,
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13 “[a]lthough such references indicate important developments in Thai society at the national level
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15 or in Bangkok... that does not necessarily mean that a broad-based transformation of Thai legal
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17 consciousness has occurred in the everyday lives of ordinary citizens throughout the country”
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19 (p.510). By contrast, China’s promotion of legal consciousness is, strikingly, a state project, not
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21 only one of bottom-up activism or global diffusion. Policy makers aspire to penetrate to the
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23 grassroots and to reach every Chinese citizen.
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29 Part of the background for this study is China’s quarter-century-long, state-led program
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31 for popularizing law; however, programming to promote legal consciousness has been slower to
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33 reach rural areas. As Epstein (1994) notes of the 1980s, “the effects of legal proselytism were
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35 felt less in rural areas, which contain[ed] about 80 percent of China’s population” (p.35). During
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37 the fifth five-year plan for popularizing law from 2006-2010, rural China contained about 50
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39 percent of the population, and these 650 million rural residents were explicitly identified as an
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41 important target for popularizing law. Official goals were to improve “legal consciousness (法律
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43 意识)” and the ability to use law to solve problems—all in the service of enhancing both
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45 economic growth and political stability (State Council, 2011). Minister of Justice Wu Aiying
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47 indicates that during the fifth five-year plan, 1.36 million discrete propaganda activities were
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56 ² The NGO community also engages in promotion of legal consciousness, but it suffers from two limitations. The
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58 NGO community is more resource constrained than the state and itself faces a hostile regulatory environment
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60 created by the state.

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directed at rural residents. For example, at the county/district level, 1,530 television stations broadcast serialized legal dramas as part of the policy of popularizing law. In another example, banners displayed in some rural areas (other than the study areas) during the fifth five-year plan read “Legal knowledge enters the countryside; handling matters according to law promotes harmony (法律知识进农村；依法办事促和谐)” and “Defend legal order; strive to be a new kind of farmer (维护法律秩序；争做新型农民).” Thus, the goal of the Chinese state is to create a state-inflected legal consciousness, a project that increasingly targets the rural population.

Haltom and McCann (2004) highlight the importance of media messages in shaping legal consciousness, a view echoed in the Chinese context by Gallagher (2006). Other studies identify socialization through education, transmission of attitudes and information from family and friends (Merry, 1985), and contact with lawyers (Felstiner, Abel & Sarat,1980-81) as important sources of legal consciousness. Thus, the existing literature suggests that an individual’s legal consciousness reflects her media exposure, socialization and experience. The present study assesses the influence of state-controlled media on legal consciousness in rural China while controlling for other relevant factors.

Measuring the legal consciousness of rural residents in China poses some distinct challenges. Legal consciousness itself is a diffuse concept that reflects both the knowledge of how law operates and the use of this knowledge in one’s interactions in everyday life. Scholars often explore it in context—for example, McCann (1994) in the context of the pay-equity movement in the United States and Gallagher (2006) in the context of labor disputes in Shanghai. This study also examines legal consciousness in context. In particular, it focuses on legal aid for ordinary rural citizens. The empirical strategy is described in the data and analysis section, below.

Legitimacy

The other concept central to this project is legitimacy. Legitimacy is the belief on the part of citizens that the dictates of the state are right and proper (Hechter, 2009, p. 280). The basis for this belief may be multi-faceted. One possible basis for this belief is government performance (Levi, Sacks & Tyler, 2009; Zhao, 2001). Perry (2008) notes the high priority assigned to the “attainment of socioeconomic security” in two millennia of Chinese political thought. She argues that the ideas “that people have a just claim to a decent livelihood and that a state’s legitimacy depends upon satisfying this claim” date back to the teachings of Confucius and Mencius (p. 38).

An alternative basis for belief in regime legitimacy relates to process. For Tyler (2001), the most important determinant of legitimacy is procedural fairness rather than regime performance. While falling far from the legal ideal, authoritarian regimes may embrace rule by law as a procedural means of legitimating their rule. In the Chinese case, according to Fu (2010), “Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, law reformers had an ambitious goal to legalize social life. Law did not only represent the new normative order, but a new way of thinking, a new religion. Through legalization, the party state aimed at achieving a framework in which every social problem required, and was provided with, a new legal solution. Through the application of law in concrete cases, communities were re-connected with the state. Law was replacing the failed political ideology to legitimize the party-state” (p. 176). Thus, the specification of rules in the form of law is intended to promote an image of procedural fairness and to endow rules with a veneer of rightness. As Finer (1997) points out, “Rulers... are legitimated by belief systems. ...[and] where the claim of the ruler to authority is out of kilter with the prevalent belief system of the society, he must either ‘change his plea’ ...or fall” (p. 28-29). In this way, the CCP seeks to establish rule by law as a new legitimating basis of the regime. As noted above, there is

broad scholarly support for the idea that the Chinese state, like other authoritarian states, promotes rule by law in order to enhance its legitimacy (Diamant et al., 2005; Epstein, 1994; Landry, 2008; Lee, 2007; Massoud, 2013; Rajah, 2012; Stockman and Gallagher, 2011).

However, these claims have not been tested directly, in part due to the challenges in measuring legitimacy (Gilley, 2006; Hechter, 2009). One approach to measuring legitimacy focuses on trust in government. Braithwaite and Levi (1998) associate trust in government with legitimacy and highlight the effects of such trust, namely broad acceptance of state dictates and obedience to the law. Levi and Stoker (2000, p. 484) also relate trust in government and political legitimacy. In the context of contemporary China, Li (2004, p. 230-231) explicitly links high levels of popular trust in government with regime resilience. Gilley (2006) combines attitudinal and behavioral elements in his broad, cross-national approach to measuring legitimacy, which he defines as the rightfulness of state authority “as believed by citizens” along three dimensions: accordance with existing rules (legality), congruence with shared values (justification), as well as positive actions that express a citizen’s willingness to obey (consent) (Gilley, 2006, p. 503). For Gilley (2006, p. 505), one indicator of legitimacy is political trust, although poor data availability precludes its use in his analysis. As Weatherford (1992) notes, legitimacy is a complex concept, and most empirical literature breaks it into component parts. “Thus, various lines of research (on alienation, political trust, modes of participation, political efficacy) all partake of a common interest in how citizens evaluate governmental authority” (Weatherford 1992, p.149). This study employs questions about trust in government to capture legitimacy.

Studies of trust in government in China commonly disaggregate the central and local state and their agencies. This approach is consistent with Levi and Stoker’s (2000) call for scholars “to expand their inquiries beyond the traditional focus on citizens’ trust in ‘government’

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3 in general, by studying the causes and consequences of citizens' trust in specific political actors,
4 organizations or institutions" (p. 495). Scholars of China find that villagers have greater trust in
5 central than in local authorities (Lee, 2007; Li, 2004). Studies by Lee (2007), Li (2004) and Lü
6 (2014) suggest that popular awareness of laws and policies enhances trust in the central but not
7 the local government. Li (2004) goes further to argue that the combination of high trust in
8 central authorities and low trust in local authorities drives "rightful resistance." According to Li,
9 villagers typically trust the intent of the center if not its capacity to follow through. Li and
10 O'Brien (2006) relate trust of the center and distrust of the local state to the likelihood of
11 villagers to engage in contentious acts and to invoke law to resist local authorities. For Lü
12 (2014), "promoting policy awareness is an important governmental strategy to generate public
13 support, because it affects the political attitudes of the general population" (425). He shows that
14 "policy awareness engendered by media reporting has enhanced citizens' trust in the central
15 government but not in local governments" (Lü, 2014, p. 433). As Lü points out, media
16 campaigns expose individuals to messages regardless of whether they are directly affected. The
17 present study focuses on legal construction in rural communities and on trust in the levels and
18 agencies of local government responsible for legal construction.

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20 A second way in which the literature disaggregates trust in government is whether the
21 trusting party has experience interacting with the state and its agencies. In an influential
22 qualitative study, Gallagher (2006) identifies the phenomenon of "informed disenchantment."
23 Focusing on aggrieved workers who, often responding to positive media messages about law and
24 legal institutions, seek to mobilize the law to resolve labor disputes, she finds that such
25 experience has a negative effect on attitudes toward the legal system. Building on these findings,
26 Stockmann and Gallagher (2011) conduct a content analysis of the labor press and a sample

survey of urban residents in four Chinese cities; they attribute the favorable assessments of the likely effectiveness of the Labor Law to positive messages about the law in television and radio programming. Michelson and Read (2011) describe overall positive attitudes towards the courts and police among the majority of respondents to their 2002 survey of rural residents in six Chinese provinces. “General perceptions of official justice were very favorable to an important degree because so few people experienced it” (Michelson and Read, 2011, p. 195). By contrast, Liebman (2014) describes Chinese courts as generally “trapped in a...cycle of popular distrust” (p. 105). Such distrust may be limited to those who have direct experience with the legal system. In this study, ordinary rural residents are exposed to media messages about law and legal institutions regardless of whether they have experienced grievances, and the effect of media messaging on legal consciousness and trust in government is tested directly.

Data and Analysis

The study employs a multi-method approach to explore legal consciousness and regime legitimacy, reporting on a quasi-experiment in conjunction with a panel survey implemented in a random sample of rural residents in two counties of a single province in central China before and after differential exposure to a media campaign. The study design takes advantage of the fact that official legal awareness programming was being gradually extended to rural areas during the fifth five-year plan and that not all rural counties initiated legal awareness campaigns at the same time.

Quasi-experiment

The hallmarks of field experiments are interventions implemented in natural settings with random assignment to treatment and control. This study achieves the first but not the second

condition.³ The treatment entailed a media campaign to promote legal consciousness, overseen by the study team and implemented through local government and related agencies in one (treatment) county, which was matched for analysis with a similar (control) county. A panel survey was conducted in representative samples of residents of both counties before and after the media treatment.⁴ The study relies for causal inference on analysis of panel data; in this way, the study, while involving an intervention, is analytically closer to a quasi-experiment. Panel survey data allow us to evaluate the effect of the media campaign on legal consciousness and regime legitimacy, while controlling for other relevant factors.

Matching on key economic and demographic characteristics, the team identified two counties in a province of central China; like much of rural China, these counties had historically limited implementation of official “rule of law” programming compared to urban areas. The treatment county of Ailin was matched with the non-treatment county of Xintan.⁵ Publically available data for 2006 provided the basis for the initial match. Both counties are located north of the provincial capital in a central Chinese province (ensuring they share cultural, linguistic, and geographic characteristics) and have sizeable rural populations. As of 2006, prior to the initiation of the project, 75 percent of Ailin’s population was considered “rural,” compared to 85 percent of Xintan’s. At the same time, however, Xintan’s industrial sector was larger, resulting in a somewhat larger industrial share in GDP and proportionally smaller primary and tertiary shares. 2006 per capita GDP figures were roughly comparable at 9,019 yuan for Ailin and 10,158 yuan for Xintan. Both counties were more agricultural and less wealthy than the

³ This study has a high degree of “fieldness” in that the authenticity of the treatment, the participants, the context, and the outcome measures are real (Gerber and Green, 2012).

⁴ While government agencies were involved in the treatment (the legal awareness campaign), no related agencies in the treatment or control counties were informed of the survey, which was conducted independently.

⁵ County names are pseudonyms in order to ensure confidentiality. Central China was selected based on the location of the local partner university.

provincial average.⁶ Additional considerations are important in matching in field experiments. The treatment and control counties were selected from different prefectures in order to avoid spillover effects in the control county during project implementation (Humphreys & Weinstein, 2009).

Treatment: Media Campaign

The treatment entailed a media campaign to promote legal consciousness, overseen by the study team and implemented through local government and related agencies in the treatment site, Ailin County. The control site, Xintan County, received no intervention by the study team. The campaign was designed to be similar in form and content to official legal consciousness programs elsewhere.

The media campaign focused on awareness and knowledge of legal aid, specifically. The study team selected legal aid as the focus of the media campaign for several reasons. In practice, it is a central piece of the authoritarian state’s project of legal construction. In theory, legal aid is broadly relevant to citizens who may encounter a wide range of possible grievances and who may be further educated about the law and legal recourse through consultation with the legal aid center (Lee 2007, p. 184). Legal aid is theoretically important in the construction of “rule of law.” Writing about democratic contexts, Epp (1998) highlights the importance of both legal consciousness and support structures like legal aid in rights claiming. Analysts of Chinese legal development agree that legal aid is important in enabling people to mobilize the law (Chen 2011, p. 240). “Legal aid contributes to rule of law by bringing more disputes into the legal framework,

⁶ The quality of matching was confirmed by comparing characteristics of the sampled populations in the panel survey conducted in representative samples from the two counties. In the 2007 baseline survey, the average age of respondents was 51 and 48, and respondents had completed 5.4 and 5.8 years of schooling on average in Ailin and Xintan, respectively. Average household annual income reported in the two samples was 15,878 rmb in Ailin and 15,374 rmb in Xintan. The baseline survey also demonstrates the quality of matching with respect to prior experience with grievances on the part of respondents. Paired t-tests show no statistically significant difference between the treatment and control.

thus making law a dominant force for normative and institutional order” (Fu 2009, p. 176-77).

Preliminary interviews conducted in advance of the survey indicate that some of the most common grievances experienced by rural residents included violations of land rights, personal and workplace injuries, and family issues like divorce, child support, and elder care; all of these issues potentially could be addressed with the support of legal aid in the study communities and have been addressed with the support of legal aid in other communities (Fu, 2009).

Second, the establishment of legal aid is a relatively recent phenomenon in China. As Liebman (2004) notes, “The term ‘legal aid’ was virtually unknown in China prior to 1993” (p.214). The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) launched a state-sponsored legal-aid initiative beginning in 1994,⁷ and issued the “Notice on the Speedy Establishment of Legal Aid Organs and the Development of Legal Aid Work” in 1996. Legal aid is considered a government responsibility in China and falls under the supervision of the MoJ National Legal Aid Center. The State Council formally promulgated regulations governing legal aid work in 2003, significantly broadening the scope of state-provided legal aid to allow individuals to apply directly for legal aid, including in civil cases. The official goal of legal aid is to facilitate access to justice, and the regulations permit broad scope for initial consultations, even if means tests ultimately limit eligibility for litigation support. Legal aid is also provided by a range of civil society organizations, but, according to Chen (2004, p. 240), approximately 90 percent of funding for legal aid has come from the government since 2001. By 2007, when the field experiment was implemented, there were more than 3,150 legal aid centers in total, handling more than 300,000 cases and providing millions of legal consultations (Fu, 2009). In rural China, the county-level justice bureau, part of the hierarchy headed by the Ministry of Justice, oversees the government-

⁷ Zhang Geng and Gong Xiaobing, eds., 中国法律援助制度的前前后后 The Birth of China’s Legal Aid System Beijing: Zhongguo Fangzheng Press, 1998, as cited by Fu (2009).

run legal aid center in each county. The legal-aid center is typically staffed by a legal-aid lawyer. Below the county, the township government includes a justice station (司法所), staffed by a justice assistant (司法助理员), who is a civil servant accountable to the county justice bureau and whose duties include provision of legal aid.⁸ As of 2007, China had 41,000 township-level justice stations with approximately 100,000 staff members (Fu, 2009). Government-run legal aid centers and justice stations in the study counties of Ailin and Xintan were established in the early 2000s. Thus, implementing the treatment condition, a publicity program that reflects official efforts to promote legal aid awareness, is broadly relevant to understanding state efforts to construct “rule of law” in rural China.

The study team implemented a multi-faceted, year-long media campaign focused on knowledge and awareness of legal aid in the treatment county.⁹ The team worked with local agencies to produce local television spots and features introducing and demonstrating the function of legal aid, newspaper articles and ads promoting legal aid and local legal-aid services, billboards in high-traffic locations with information on how to access legal aid, sidewalk promotional activities in towns, and, finally, traveling performances promoting legal aid in outlying areas. These media are typical of those used by local agencies elsewhere in China to popularize law, as described above. The treatment, for example, included, in addition to public service advertising, television programming with special episodes highlighting legal aid on the local weekly television program “On Politics and Law (政法天地).” Public-service ads in the

⁸ Counties are the lowest level of government with a full complement of government offices, but townships are the lowest level of government in the constitutional structure.

⁹ The media campaign about government-sponsored legal aid was informed by the baseline survey described in detail, below. The survey queried respondents about the media channels they most commonly relied upon for information. Baseline survey findings indicate that television was the primary source of legal information for most rural residents in the sample (66.8 percent). Following television, talking with friends and colleagues and reading the newspaper were the next most common sources of legal information. Radio was no longer as important a source of information as it once was, and the internet had yet to have significant reach in that area of the country. Only 0.2 percent of respondents identified internet as a primary source of legal information.

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3 local newspaper read, “Implement legal aid; build a harmonious society (实施法律援助, 构建
4 和谐社会)” and provided contact information for the local government-run legal aid center.
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9 Public-service billboards were intended to catch people’s attention: “Protect your rights in court;
10 don’t take matters into your own hands! (贫弱者维权找法院.切勿一时冲动酿成大祸!),” again
11 including contact information for the government-run legal aid center. The campaign was
12 similar in form and content to other official programs to promote legal consciousness; in this
13 particular case, the media campaign focused on legal aid and was designed and placed in
14 cooperation between the study team and local agencies.
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23 *Panel Survey*

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25 The study team implemented a panel survey in a representative sample of rural residents
26 in the two counties to measure legal consciousness and attitudes about regime legitimacy. The
27 baseline and follow-up panel surveys involved face-to-face interviews that addressed sources of
28 legal information, knowledge of relevant laws, awareness of legal aid, experience with
29 grievances, attitudes toward actors and institutions in the political-legal system, social and
30 political capital.
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39 The sample is a stratified, multistage sample with probability proportionate to size in
40 each of two counties, sampling three townships in each county, two villages in each township
41 and 72 households in each village. The completed sample size in the first wave is 638, reflecting
42 a response rate of 76.5 per cent. Fourteen months later in 2008, the study team returned to the
43 same respondent households. The team reached 76 percent (484) of respondent households for
44 the follow-up survey¹⁰ and augmented the sample with 137 additional households, selected
45 according to the same procedures described above, resulting in 621 respondents to the second-
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56 ¹⁰ The most likely reason for failure to reach respondent households is the timing of departure from the village for
57 migrant labor opportunities.
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3 wave survey. Difference-in-difference (DD) analyses, below, are limited to the 484 respondents
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5 who completed both waves of the panel survey.
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8 As Lovell (2012) highlights, in US-centered studies of legal consciousness, there are two
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10 distinct bodies of scholarship that employ different conceptualizations and different
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12 methodologies. Socio-legal scholars of legal consciousness like Ewick and Silbey (1998) employ
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14 qualitative methods to investigate law as “a constitutive element of social life rather than an
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16 external force that acts upon individual[s]” (Lovell, 2012, p. 17). Survey-based research like that
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18 of Tyler (1990), by contrast, focuses more on individuals’ perceptions of and experiences with
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20 law and legal institutions. In the Chinese context, both approaches are evident, with O’Brien and
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22 Li (2006) adopting a more constitutive approach, Michelson and Read (2011) adopting a more
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24 experiential approach, and Gallagher (2006) and Gallagher and Wang (2011) adopting a hybrid
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26 approach. This study employs survey methods to evaluate the state project of constructing legal
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28 consciousness on the part of ordinary citizens in China.
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34 Specifically, survey questions tap the concept of legal consciousness by measuring
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36 specific knowledge of legal aid services in the community, views about the utility of legal aid,
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38 and attitudes toward seeking legal aid among residents in the two counties.¹¹ Legal
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40 consciousness involves not only knowledge of law and legal institutions but also understanding
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42 and relating to the world through legal discourses. The survey further measures legal
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44 consciousness by asking respondents about consulting the legal aid center in the context of
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46 hypothetical grievances. The study team drew upon in-depth interviews in designing the
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48 hypothetical vignettes to closely reflect actual grievances common in rural areas of central China
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50 at the time of the study, although most randomly-selected respondents had never encountered
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56 ¹¹ The questions are: Have you heard of the legal aid center in this locality (yes or no)? Do you feel it would be
57 helpful in a current or future dispute (yes, no, or don’t know)? Responses of “don’t know” are coded as the mid-
58 range value.
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such grievances in the real world. One vignette reflects a type of land dispute common in central China during the 2000s; another vignette reflects a type of injury experienced by rural migrant workers. Presented in 2007-08, the first vignette reads:

Five years ago, Mr. Wang left to work as a migrant laborer and allowed the six mu of land contracted [for thirty years] by his family from the village collective to go fallow. The village collective repossessed the land and re-contracted it to Mr. Chen. Last year, Mr. Wang returned to the village and demanded his land back. However, Mr. Chen believed that the village collective's contracting of land to him had followed relevant procedures, and he did not want to return the land to Mr. Wang. If you were Mr. Wang, what would you do?

Follow-up questions assess the likelihood of seeking legal aid, regardless of whether the respondent imagined pursuing recourse through mediation, petitioning the government, or litigating in the local court. The respondent could also indicate that he/she would do nothing or take other actions.

We also assess the legal consciousness of respondents through a second vignette that, our interviews suggest, reflects the experiences of migrant workers who return to their home communities, where they may seek legal assistance.¹² It reads:

Mr. Zhang left to work as a migrant laborer at a construction firm. During the course of work, he was seriously injured, resulting in the loss of his hand, an injury classified as level two. However, the construction firm paid only a small part of the medical expenses and refused to pay compensation. If you were Mr. Zhang, what would you do?

¹² Fu (2010) indicates that "when migrant workers are involved in disputes in cities, they return to their hometowns for legal assistance...." From there, they "claim their unpaid wages or compensation for injuries they suffered in the course of employment. This demand is huge..." (p. 168).

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The follow-up questions about seeking legal aid were the same as for the first vignette. Overall, survey questions are designed to capture the defining features of legal consciousness outlined above—specifically, respondents’ knowledge of the operation of law and their use of law to relate to people and issues in their broader community.

Survey questions tap attitudes of respondents toward regime legitimacy through a battery of questions about trust in government. Specifically, survey questions asked respondents to report their level of trust in each of multiple government agencies, including multiple levels of the party-state. Responses are coded 1-5, with 5 as the highest reported level of trust, 1 as the lowest, and “don’t know” as the mid-range value of 3.

Media and State-constructed Legal Consciousness

The findings reported here show that a media campaign, reflecting one key aspect of the state’s program of “rule-of-law” construction, significantly shapes the legal consciousness of ordinary rural citizens. Prior to implementation of the media campaign, legal consciousness was comparably low in the treatment and control counties, with no substantive or statistical difference.¹³ Only 11.3 percent of respondents in Ailin and 10.9 percent in Xintan were aware of legal aid, according to the pre-test survey conducted in 2007 (Table 1 provides descriptive data), even though government-sponsored legal aid centers had already been in existence in both counties for about five years. Only 2.7 percent of respondents in Ailin and 4.0 percent in Xintan had ever seen information relating to legal aid. Respondents were equally unlikely to indicate that they would seek legal aid when presented with hypothetical grievances of the types commonly encountered in the community.

¹³ None of the paired t-tests show a statistically significant difference at the 0.05 level, suggesting a well-balanced split between the treatment and the control.

While the level of legal consciousness among rural citizens is low, we expect the media campaign to have a positive influence on legal consciousness. Table 1 also presents descriptive data from the second-wave of the panel survey, which followed the implementation of the media campaign in the treatment county (Ailin). After one year of media messaging, 16.4 percent of respondents in the treatment county of Ailin (representing an increase of 5.1 percentage points) and 11.2 percent in the control county of Xintan (reflecting little change—an increase of only 0.3 percentage point) were aware of legal aid, a raw experimental treatment effect of 4.8 percentage points. The difference in difference (DD) estimation is defined as the average of individual-level differences in the treatment group before and after treatment minus the average of individual-level differences in the control group before and after treatment.¹⁴ Tables 2-5 report the results of difference-in-difference statistical analyses for the measures of legal consciousness outlined above: awareness of legal aid, views about the utility of legal aid, and attitudes toward seeking legal aid among residents in the two counties. DD analyses show that, controlling for gender, age, education, income, real-world dispute experience, party membership, government employment, and frequency of media usage, the media treatment has a positive and significant effect on awareness of legal aid (Table 2) and on views about the utility of legal aid (Table 3).¹⁵

Legal consciousness involves not only knowledge of law and legal institutions but also understanding and relating to the world through legal discourses. The study team further assesses the effect of the media messages on legal consciousness by asking respondents about consulting the legal aid center in the context of hypothetical grievances about common rural

¹⁴ The probability of seeking legal aid can be expressed as $Y_2 - Y_1 = B_0 + B_1 * \text{treatment group} + B_2 * \text{vector of other factors (gender, age, education, household income, etc.)}$. B_1 captures the experimental effect.

¹⁵ Real-world dispute experience was captured by a question asking if the respondent had encountered a specific grievance in the preceding ten years. For media usage, reported frequent use for any media outlet (television, newspaper, magazine, radio, internet, etc.) is coded as frequent media usage. The significant, positive relationship between income and utility of legal aid may reflect information on the broad scope for legal aid consultations, even if means tests preclude litigation support.

complaints, including workplace injuries sustained by rural migrant workers and property claims to rural land (Tables 4-5). DD analyses show that the media treatment has a significant and positive effect; respondents in Ailin are more likely to anticipate seeking legal aid in the context of a grievance, regardless of the dispute resolution mechanism—mediation, petition, or litigation—they imagine using.¹⁶ The survey approach, implemented in a representative sample of the general population of the two counties, avoids some of the challenges common to research on legal consciousness. “Because much legal consciousness research is conducted within dispute-processing institutions, the legal consciousness of many interview subjects has already been prompted and focused by their contact with these institutions before they become part of the research and therefore less characteristic of the general population” (Hoffman, 2003, p. 695). This analysis of attitudes of the general population controls for real-world dispute experience but finds no significant effect on legal consciousness. However, older and more educated respondents are more likely to express willingness to seek legal aid in the context of the hypothetical disputes, one aspect of legal consciousness. Overall, the findings provide evidence that the state’s explicit strategy to use the media to shape the legal consciousness of ordinary citizens is powerful and effective.

State-constructed Legal Consciousness and Regime Legitimacy

This study also finds support for the hypothesis that the state’s project to construct authoritarian rule by law—here, focusing on legal consciousness—enhances regime legitimacy. Building on the quasi-experiment and representative panel survey, the following paragraphs present several tests of this hypothesis. As outlined above, the study focuses on trust in multiple levels of the party-state to capture regime legitimacy. Table 6 presents a DD analysis of trust in

¹⁶ There is one exception. In the context of the hypothetical land dispute, the coefficient for the treatment in the context of litigation is in the anticipated (positive) direction but does not achieve statistical significance. This result may reflect the frequent refusal of Chinese courts to hear rural land-related cases.

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3 local authorities at the county, township, and village levels. It shows a strong positive
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5 relationship between respondents in the treatment county and trust in county authorities but not
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7 village authorities; the effect on trust in township authorities is less robust.¹⁷ It is noteworthy
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9 that legal aid is provided under the auspices of the justice bureau at the county level and the
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11 smaller justice station at the township level. Thus, we would expect the effect to operate where
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13 legal aid resources are present and relevant—primarily at the county level but less so at the
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15 township level or the village level, where no legal aid is provided and where village authorities
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17 may only refer residents to legal aid.
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22 The variable “treatment” indicates that respondents reside in the treatment county;
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24 however, this measure assumes that all those in the treatment group learned about legal aid
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26 through the media campaign and that no one in control group did. Table 7 addresses this issue
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28 by presenting a sub-group analysis of all respondents in both Ailin and Xintan. It differentiates
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30 those who reported awareness of legal aid in neither the baseline nor the follow-up survey
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32 (“never aware”), those who reported awareness of legal aid in both the baseline and the follow-
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34 up survey (“always aware”), and, finally, those who reported no awareness of legal aid in the
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36 baseline but did report awareness in the follow-up survey (“newly aware”). The latter category
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38 is the group of interest. Table 7 shows the relationship between each of these subgroups and
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40 trust in multiple levels of government both before and after the media campaign. Focusing on
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42 attitudes toward government after the legal awareness media campaign, the relationship between
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44 “newly aware” respondents and trust in government is positive and significant, while the
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46 relationship between “never aware” respondents and trust in government is negative and
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58 ¹⁷ Education and past dispute experience are both weakly negatively associated with trust in the county government.
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significant.¹⁸ This finding suggests that learning about state-provided legal aid significantly enhances regime legitimacy.

A third test of the hypotheses estimates a two-stage least squares (2SLS) model. The 2SLS uses a citizen’s residence in the treatment county as an instrument for legal awareness. Trust in government after the media campaign is then expressed as a function of legal awareness after the treatment, the baseline level of trust in government, and the set of control variables (including age, education, income, real-world dispute experience, party membership, government employment, and frequency of media usage) (Table 8a). The first stage equation expresses legal awareness after the media campaign in 2008 as a function of being in the treatment county in the baseline year of 2007, the baseline level of legal awareness, and the set of control variables (Table 8b). The key identifying assumptions are that 1) living the treatment county before the media campaign is correlated with receiving the media message and 2) residing in the treatment county before the media campaign affects trust in government through its effect on awareness and not through any other factor or unobserved characteristics.

Table 8 shows the positive and significant effect of legal awareness on trust in county and township governments and even village authorities. Legal awareness appears to strongly increase trust for the levels of government that provide legal aid, as highlighted in the media campaign. This finding indicates that learning about state-provided legal aid significantly enhances trust in government, our measure of regime legitimacy at the local level. The findings with respect to increased trust in village authorities are not as robust across specifications. This aspect of trust is further examined in qualitative terms in the next section.

Causal Mechanisms

¹⁸ The relationship between “newly aware” respondents and trust in *village* authorities is positive and achieves statistical significance. However, the relationship between legal consciousness and trust at the village level is not as robust for the reasons suggested above. See also Table 8, below.

Qualitative data suggest that local state institutions are one mechanism linking legal consciousness and regime legitimacy.¹⁹ Prior to the implementation of the legal-aid awareness campaign as part of this study, the director of the Justice Bureau in Ailin County in an interview described the “legal consciousness of local residents” as “very backward (农民的法律意识还是很落后).” In particular, he noted that “almost no one knew about the existence of [government-provided] legal aid (知道法律援助的人非常少几乎没有).” Indeed, interviews conducted by the author with farmers in the same county prior to the treatment suggest that they did not think in legal terms; they exhibited a low level of legal consciousness—that is, not understanding or relating to the world through legal discourses (McCann, 1994). One farmer, dissatisfied over the level of compensation received for a land taking by the government, chose to do nothing. In referring to her family’s decision to lump it, she said, “Of course we had objections, but there was nothing we could do. Farmers have no culture. We are not articulate in speaking or writing” (author’s interview). Another farmer described ending up in a fist fight over a land boundary dispute with a neighbor; the fight resulted in injuries to both parties. “It was our own affair for us to resolve ourselves,” he said (author’s interview). Pursuing any kind of recourse informed by law was not a consideration, even among rural residents like these who had experienced grievances.

Further interviews provide evidence of changing legal consciousness, and, concomitantly, trust in local government. One couple in the treatment county, neither of whom was selected into the sample for surveying, described their experience with a dispute after a fellow villager advised them to seek legal aid. The dispute involved a land contract. The farmer and his wife had

¹⁹ More than a dozen open-ended interviews were conducted by study team members in Ailing County in 2007; local government and village officials were identified through snowball sampling, while aggrieved households outside of the random sample were identified through the justice bureau. After completion of the survey, in-depth, follow-up interviews were conducted with 20 survey respondents.

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entered into an agreement to subcontract a plot of land to a fellow villager. After several years working as a migrant laborer, the farmer returned to the village and, with his wife, sought the return of the land. The other party refused. Through the offices of legal aid, the dispute went to mediation. The farmer and his fellow villager agreed to divide the land, and, in June 2009, the two parties signed an agreement governing the land and filed it with the village committee as required (study team interview). Rather than “lumping it” or resorting to fisticuffs as in the pre-treatment examples involving similar issues described above, the aggrieved party in this case demonstrated heightened legal consciousness through word of mouth in the aftermath of the media campaign and also showed trust in local government institutions that provided access to justice and resolution. Although the population of interest in this study is the general population and not only those who have experienced grievances themselves, accounts of interactions between rural residents and legal-aid providers may shed light on how awareness of legal aid can increase trust in local government. A thread that runs through Fu’s (2009) interviews in rural communities is that rural legal-aid providers are trusted by their rural clients. Moreover, for some issues, like land rights, village leaders may be party to the dispute; as a result, dispute resolution may be pushed outside of the village, higher up the state hierarchy. For other issues, like workplace grievances, the ability of village leaders to advocate for villagers may be limited compared to that of a civil servant located in the local government bureaucracy. The availability of government-sponsored legal aid suggests differential effects on trust in county versus township and village administrations. At the same time, village cadres are often on the frontlines in conflicts among villagers; the ability to refer villagers to legal aid at the township or county level constitutes a valuable resource for village cadres as well as residents.

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Scheingold (2004), in his influential work on law in democratic contexts, argues that rights have a double-edged quality—both legitimating and mobilizing. He emphasizes that “the myth of rights can generate support for the political system by legitimating the existing order” (p.91). As Lü (2014), points out, media campaigns expose individuals to messages regardless of whether they are directly affected by policy content or seek out state services. The construction of authoritarian rule by law may enhance legitimacy and thereby durability in part because, citizen awareness of state-provided legal aid can shape attitudes regardless of whether citizens ever call upon these services directly.

This study suggests that one causal mechanism linking state-constructed legal consciousness and trust in government is the creation of local state institutions like legal-aid centers—the focus of the legal awareness campaign. While the panel survey was conducted in 2007 and 2008, state-run legal-aid centers began to be established in rural areas of central China in the early 2000s. The media campaign expanded awareness of these new local state institutions. As Balme and Dowdle (2009) note, “The simple fact that these [government-sponsored legal aid] centers are creating a heightened prospect of access to justice is catalyzing changed attitudes toward the role of the state and its relationship with its citizenry” (p.17). When presented with the results of this study, one Chinese government policy analyst indicated that, as citizens perceive the government to be doing something (做事), they are more likely to trust it, even at the local level (author’s interview). The media campaign increased citizen awareness of services provided by the legal aid center of the county government justice bureau and the justice stations of the township governments. After the media campaign, citizens in Ailin, where the media campaign took place, expressed greater trust in county and township government. This evidence suggests that knowledge of the existence of government-sponsored legal aid centers shapes

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citizens’ attitudes toward the state. This study responds to Levi and Stoker’s (2000) call for work “to be done that adequately pulls together institutional features of government that ensure trustworthiness” (p.496).

Such local state institutions constitute a form of infrastructural power (Mann, 1993), recently invoked by Slater and Fenner (2011) to explain authoritarian durability. An authoritarian state apparatus that can successfully penetrate and coordinate society can achieve durability through mechanisms of coercion, extraction, registration, and service provision (Ibid.). Lee and Zhang (2013) echo the importance of infrastructural power; they ask, “How are state infrastructural techniques received and perceived by citizens or challengers to bring about political stability?” (p. 1477). At issue is whether the local state has the “capacity to handle, contain, and absorb collective mobilization,” and whether “micro-apparatuses” of the state exist that have direct interaction with citizens. Legal-aid centers at the county and township levels in China represent the promise of state service provision to ordinary citizens. Levi and Stoker (2000), in their review of political trust, share the emphasis on the local context: “the ordinary relationships that citizens have with political authorities are most likely to be local in focus. They involve local problems, if not local authorities, though perhaps usually both” (p. 495). The evidence presented in this study highlights the importance of local institutions as causal mechanisms linking state-constructed legal consciousness and enhanced regime legitimacy. Importantly, these mechanisms operate at the local level and are reflected in attitudes about local state institutions. The construction of such local state institutions is one way in which the regime may attempt to “inoculate against mass threats” (Svolik, 2012) and strengthen its durability.

Conclusion

This study builds on a growing body of work that examines the apparent embrace of “rule of law” by authoritarian regimes as diverse as Sudan (Massoud, 2013), Singapore (Rajah, 2012), China (Stockman & Gallagher, 2011), and Egypt (Moustafa, 2007). This body of work identifies regime legitimation as both the motivation for and result of authoritarian programs of legal construction. However, the relationship between legal construction and regime legitimation is difficult to demonstrate empirically. The present study offers a novel empirical approach to test this claim, drawing on a quasi-experiment and original panel survey in rural China. It finds that the Chinese state’s project of legal construction powerfully shapes the legal consciousness of ordinary rural citizens; moreover, state-constructed legal consciousness enhances regime legitimacy. The study brings together insights from the law-and-society literature on legal consciousness and comparative studies of trust in government to examine these concepts in context. It suggests that the causal mechanism linking state-constructed legal consciousness and regime legitimacy is the expansion of local state infrastructural institutions like state-run legal aid centers in rural communities.

Theories of authoritarian durability identify regime strategies to counter both elite and mass threats. Much attention has focused at the elite level, particularly on the role of authoritarian legislatures in securing elite commitment. This study focuses on mass engagement with the authoritarian regime. This part of the comparative literature has concentrated attention on institutions—like elections to local congresses—that provide information and accountability (Manion, 2015) and on the distribution of patronage in the context of authoritarian elections (Blaydes, 2011; Magaloni, 2006). Dimitrov (2013) and Slater & Fenner (2011) similarly draw attention to the “institutional foundations” of authoritarian durability. State-provided legal aid and state-controlled media that popularizes legal aid are such institutional foundations. This

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study contributes to this literature by highlighting the way legal construction builds infrastructural power, connecting citizens to the state and promoting state-dominated channels for managing citizen concerns.

The finding that greater legal awareness is associated with increased trust in local government contrasts with other studies in rural China that find high trust in the central government and low trust in local governments. While Lü (2014) shows that policy awareness resulting from exposure to state media in the other policy realms increased trust in the center but not in the local government, this study, in which the infrastructure for implementing legal aid is embedded in local communities, finds that media-driven awareness of legal aid enhances trust in local government. The findings presented here highlight the importance of information and institutions at the level of the local state and suggest that local governance is an important locus for future studies of authoritarian durability. Moreover, this study controls for real-world dispute experience and finds a strong relationship between legal consciousness and regime legitimacy.

The findings point to both awareness and provision of government services at the local level as a valuable locus of future research; in this case, the services of interest are legal aid provision, which relates to a kind of authoritarian procedural legitimacy. Directives from above to meet targets for popularizing law—as in many other areas of governance—comes as unfunded mandates, placing a burden on rural government agencies. Further research is needed to address how local government responses to unfunded mandates for building authoritarian “rule of law” vary across locals. Such process- and service-oriented sources of regime legitimacy may be increasingly important as performance legitimacy faces renewed challenges in the form of slower growth. I argue elsewhere that the Chinese authoritarian regime employs law to enshrine substantively restrictive rights in formal law, to establish the legitimacy of these restrictive laws,

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3 and to channel conflict over restrictive laws through formal legal institutions, including
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5 mediation, petition, and litigation (Whiting, 2014). The present study suggests that
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8 infrastructural power, promoting awareness of local government provision of services like legal
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10 aid, plays an important role in regime legitimation at the local level.
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Table 1: Baseline and Follow-up Legal Consciousness and Trust (Survey Data, 2007-2008)

	Baseline (2007)						Follow-up (2008)					
	Treatment County (Ailin)			Control County (Xintan)			Treatment County (Ailin)			Control County (Xintan)		
	N	Mean	St. Dev.	N	Mea n	St. Dev.	N	Mean	St. Dev.	N	Mea n	St. Dev.
<u>Legal Consciousness</u>	33			30	0.10		32			30	0.11	
Awareness of legal aid (0=No; 1=Yes)	5	0.113	0.318	3	9	0.312	0	0.166	0.372	1	3	0.316
	33			30	0.04		32			30	0.03	
Exposure to legal aid materials (0=No; 1=Yes)	5	0.027	0.162	3	0	0.195	0	0.078	0.269	1	3	0.180
Utility of legal aid (0=Not helpful, 1=Don't know, 2=Helpful)	33			30	1.03		32			30	1.02	
	5	1.024	0.153	3	3	0.197	0	1.066	0.260	1	0	0.162
Choice to seek legal aid (0=No; 1=Yes)												
Hypothetical context												
Land Grievance												
	33			30	0.13		32			30	0.06	
Mediation	5	0.096	0.294	3	2	0.339	0	0.119	0.324	1	6	0.249
	33			30	0.10		32			30	0.09	
Petition	5	0.075	0.263	3	9	0.312	0	0.134	0.342	1	1	0.288
	33			30	0.10		32			30	0.04	
Litigation	5	0.096	0.294	3	2	0.304	0	0.122	0.328	1	0	0.196
Injury Grievance												
	33			30	0.04		32			30	0.04	
Mediation	5	0.009	0.094	3	6	0.210	0	0.106	0.309	1	0	0.196
	33			30	0.06		32			30	0.03	
Petition	5	0.018	0.133	3	9	0.254	0	0.112	0.316	1	7	0.188
	33			30	0.04		32			30	0.02	
Litigation	5	0.024	0.153	3	3	0.203	0	0.112	0.316	1	7	0.161
<u>Trust</u>												
(1=Greatly distrust... 5=Greatly trust)												
	33			30	3.63		32			30	3.47	
Trust in county	5	3.576	1.066	3	4	0.987	0	3.841	0.965	1	5	1.015
	33			30	3.61		32			30	3.45	
Trust in township	5	3.582	1.085	3	1	1.013	0	3.763	1.008	1	8	1.059
Trust in village	33	3.824	1.109	30	3.69	1.086	32	3.938	1.012	30	3.66	1.085

Table 2: Effect of Exposure to Media Treatment on Awareness of Legal Aid

Independent variable	Dependent variable: 2008 - 07	
	Awareness of Legal Aid	
Treatment (versus control)	0.080*	0.130***
	(0.041)	(0.049)
Gender (female)		-0.005
		(0.053)
Age		-0.001
		(0.003)
Education		-0.004
		(0.040)
Income		0.004
		(0.020)
Dispute experience		-0.033
		(0.069)
Party membership		0.008
		(0.044)
Government employment		0.129
		(0.110)
Frequency of media usage		0.044
		(0.059)
Constant	-0.005	-0.029
	(0.030)	(0.273)
Observations	484	340
R ²	0.008	0.029
Adjusted R ²	0.006	0.003

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

OLS regression; standard errors in parentheses.

Table 3: Effect of Exposure to Media Treatment on Attitudes toward Utility of Legal Aid

Independent variable	Dependent variable: 2008 - 2007	
	Utility of Legal Aid	
Treatment (versus control)	0.064** (0.025)	0.053* (0.031)
Gender (female)		-0.039 (0.033)
Age		-0.001 (0.002)
Education		-0.011 (0.025)
Income		0.034*** (0.013)
Dispute experience		0.003 (0.043)
Party membership		0.012 (0.027)
Government employment		-0.033 (0.069)
Frequency of media usage		-0.036 (0.037)
Constant	-0.018 (0.018)	-0.201 (0.170)
Observations	484	340
R ²	0.014	0.040
Adjusted R ²	0.012	0.014

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01
 OLS regression; standard errors in parentheses.

Table 4: Effect of Exposure to Media Treatment on Choice to Seek Legal Aid In Hypothetical Injury Dispute

Independent variable	Dependent variable: 2008 - 2007							
	Hypothetical Context							
	Mediation		Petition		Litigation		Combined	
Treatment (versus control)	0.096*** (0.028)	0.109*** (0.033)	0.141*** (0.031)	0.150*** (0.036)	0.102*** (0.028)	0.114*** (0.033)	0.192** (0.038)	0.220** (0.045)
Gender (female)		-0.035 (0.036)		0.030 (0.038)		0.046 (0.036)		0.041 (0.049)
Age		0.001 (0.002)		0.004* (0.002)		0.003 (0.002)		0.006** (0.002)
Education		0.020 (0.027)		0.078*** (0.029)		0.064** (0.027)		0.107** (0.037)
Income		0.008 (0.013)		0.012 (0.014)		-0.001 (0.013)		0.020 (0.018)
Dispute experience		0.069 (0.046)		-0.048 (0.050)		-0.019 (0.046)		-0.073 (0.063)
Party membership		-0.01 (0.029)		-0.014 (0.031)		-0.026 (0.029)		-0.027 (0.040)
Government employment		0.090 (0.074)		0.114 (0.079)		-0.036 (0.074)		-0.004 (0.101)
Frequency of media usage		-0.057 (0.040)		-0.039 (0.043)		0.01 (0.040)		-0.011 (0.054)
Constant	0.014 (0.021)	-0.096 (0.182)	-0.027 (0.023)	-0.468** (0.196)	0.000 (0.021)	-0.263 (0.182)	-0.014 (0.028)	-0.687*** (0.249)
Observations	484	340	484	340	484	340	484	340
R ²	0.023	0.054	0.042	0.078	0.026	0.053	0.051	0.100
Adjusted R ²	0.021	0.028	0.040	0.053	0.024	0.027	0.049	0.075

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

OLS regression; standard errors in parentheses.

Table 5: Effect of Exposure to Media Treatment on Choice to Seek Legal Aid In Hypothetical Land Dispute

Dependent variable: 2008 - 2007								
Independent variable	Hypothetical Context							
	Mediation		Petition		Litigation		Combined	
Treatment (versus control)	0.086**	0.088*	0.065*	0.082*	0.052	0.045	0.124**	0.138**
	(0.038)	(0.047)	(0.038)	(0.047)	(0.049)	(0.067)	(0.050)	(0.063)
Gender (female)		0.106**		0.049		0.105		0.145**
		(0.051)		(0.050)		(0.072)		(0.067)
Age		0.006**		-0.002		0.004		0.004
		(0.002)		(0.002)		(0.003)		(0.003)
Education		0.092**		0.034		-0.009		0.063
		(0.038)		(0.038)		(0.054)		(0.051)
Income		0.001		0.006		-0.001		0.001
		(0.019)		(0.019)		(0.027)		(0.025)
Dispute experience		0.077		0.101		-0.046		0.052
		(0.066)		(0.065)		(0.093)		(0.087)
Party membership		-0.029		-0.035		-0.021		-0.031
		(0.042)		(0.041)		(0.059)		(0.055)
Government employment		-0.134		-0.071		-0.003		-0.132
		(0.106)		(0.104)		(0.149)		(0.140)
Frequency of media usage		-0.036		-0.067		0.076		-0.00004
		(0.057)		(0.0456)		(0.080)		(0.075)
Constant	-0.059**	-0.535**	-0.005	-0.030	-0.036	-0.304	-0.086**	-0.484
	(0.028)	(0.261)	(0.028)	(0.257)	(0.036)	(0.367)	(0.037)	(0.345)
Observations	484	340	484	340	484	340	484	340
R ²	0.010	0.045	0.006	0.032	0.002	0.017	0.013	0.033
Adjusted R ²	0.008	0.018	0.004	0.006	0.002	-0.01	0.011	0.006

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01
OLS regression; standard errors in parentheses.

Table 6: Effect of Exposure to Media Treatment on Trust in Local Authorities

Independent variable	Dependent variable: 2008 - 2007					
	Trust in					
	Village		Township Government		County Government	
Treatment (versus control)	0.008 (0.116)	0.019 (0.136)	0.227** (0.115)	0.218 (0.140)	0.365*** (0.111)	0.399*** (0.134)
Gender (female)		-0.088 (0.146)		-0.102 (0.150)		-0.204 (0.144)
Age		-0.008 (0.007)		-0.01 (0.007)		-0.010 (0.007)
Education		0.029 (0.110)		-0.188* (0.114)		-0.181* (0.109)
Income		-0.025 (0.055)		-0.026 (0.057)		-0.020 (0.054)
Dispute experience		-0.059 (0.189)		0.117 (0.195)		-0.349* (0.187)
Party membership		0.092 (0.120)		-0.009 (0.124)		-0.009 (0.119)
Government employment		-0.483 (0.303)		-0.228 (0.313)		-0.118 (0.299)
Frequency of media usage		-0.136 (0.163)		0.225 (0.168)		0.091 (0.161)
Constant	0.091 (0.085)	0.806 (0.748)	-0.045 (0.085)	0.960 (0.771)	-0.100 (0.082)	0.997 (0.739)
Observations	484	340	484	340	484	340
R ²	0.000	0.018	0.008	0.026	0.02	0.052
Adjusted R ²	-0.002	-0.009	0.006	-0.001	0.035	0.027

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

OLS regression; standard errors in parentheses.

Table 7: Effect of Awareness of Legal Aid on Trust in Local Authorities (Sub-Group Analysis)

	Trust in					
	Village		Township Government		County Government	
	2007	2008	2007	2008	2007	2008
Panel Survey Respondents						
Never aware	-0.132 (0.122)	-0.034 (0.112)	-0.033 (0.117)	-0.194* (0.111)	-0.107 (0.114)	-0.241** (0.108)
Constant	3.861*** (0.107)	3.880*** (0.099)	3.602*** (0.103)	3.806*** (0.098)	3.676*** (0.101)	3.880*** (0.095)
Observations	484	484	484	484	484	484
R ²	0.002	0.0002	0.0002	0.006	0.002	0.01
Adjusted R ²	0.0004	-0.002	-0.002	0.004	-0.0003	0.008
	Village		Township Government		County Government	
	2007	2008	2007	2008	2007	2008
	2007	2008	2007	2008	2007	2008
Panel Survey Respondents						
Newly aware as of 2008	-0.156 (0.156)	0.304** (0.143)	-0.165 (0.150)	0.470*** (0.141)	-0.086 (0.147)	0.409*** (0.138)
Constant	3.777*** (0.054)	3.817*** (0.050)	3.596*** (0.052)	3.599*** (0.049)	3.603*** (0.051)	3.643*** (0.048)
Observations	484	484	484	484	484	484
R ²	0.002	0.009	0.003	0.022	0.001	0.018
Adjusted R ²	0.0004	0.007	0.0004	0.020	-0.001	0.016
	Village		Township Government		County Government	
	2007	2008	2007	2008	2007	2008
	2007	2008	2007	2008	2007	2008
Panel Survey Respondents						
Always aware	0.061 (0.340)	0.150 (0.313)	0.340 (0.327)	-0.112 (0.312)	0.510 (0.319)	0.315 (0.303)
Constant	3.757*** (0.051)	3.850*** (0.047)	3.569*** (0.049)	3.658*** (0.047)	3.581*** (0.048)	3.685*** (0.046)
Observations	484	484	484	484	484	484
R ²	0.000	0.0005	0.002	0.0003	0.005	0.002
Adjusted R ²	-0.002	-0.002	0.000	-0.002	0.003	0.0002

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01
OLS regression; standard errors in parentheses.

Table 8a: Two-Stage Ordinary Least Squares: Trust in Local Agencies

	Village	Township	County
Awareness 2008	2.409*	3.105**	4.933***
	(1.330)	(1.299)	(1.239)
Baseline trust 2007	0.284***		
	(0.050)		
		0.240***	
		(0.048)	
			0.248***
			(0.047)
Gender (female)	-0.016	-0.045	-0.044
	(0.120)	(0.119)	(0.114)
Age	0.003	0.004	0.004
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.005)
Education	0.056	-0.140	-0.168**
	(0.086)	(0.086)	(0.082)
Income	-0.029	-0.002	-0.037
	(0.046)	(0.045)	(0.043)
Dispute experience	-0.162	0.024	-0.066
	(0.165)	(0.164)	(0.156)
Party membership	-0.001	-0.022	-0.038
	(0.095)	(0.094)	(0.090)
Government employment	-0.369	-0.179	-0.196
	(0.255)	(0.254)	(0.243)
Frequency of media usage	-0.223	-0.003	-0.220
	(0.162)	(0.160)	(0.153)
Constant	2.714***	2.480***	2.729***
	(0.603)	(0.592)	(0.568)
Observations	340	340	340
R ²	0.131	0.122	0.162
Adjusted R ²	0.105	0.096	0.136
Residual Standard Error (df=329)	0.947	0.941	0.898
F Statistic (df=10;329)	4.979***	4.580***	6.349***

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

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Table 8b: Awareness of Legal Aid: First Stage

Independent variable	Dependent Variable: Awareness 2008
Treatment (versus control)	0.081** (0.040)
Awareness in 2007	0.042 (0.072)
Gender (female)	-0.019 (0.043)
Age	-0.001 (0.002)
Education (logged)	0.012 (0.032)
Income (logged)	0.009 (0.016)
Dispute experience	-0.055 (0.056)
Party membership	0.002 (0.035)
Government employment	0.091 (0.089)
Frequency of media usage	0.065 (0.048)
Constant	-0.006 (0.220)
Observations	340
R ²	0.035
Adjusted R ²	0.005
Residual Standard Error	0.354(df=329)
F Statistic	1.186(df=10;329)

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

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